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ABSTRACT

An emphasis on full staff involvement has been the focus of school improvement efforts at Beacon Hill Elementary School in Kelso, Washington. Following a process for improvement through the application of effective schooling research results in instructional programs, the school has involved staff in planning, goal setting, and extensive inservice programs to improve instruction while working to meet specific improvement goals. This report describes the staff involvement of district support aids, training methods for the staff through inservice programs, activities for students and parents, and the impact of the improvement effort. (JD)

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Profiles programs & products

Beacon Hill Elementary Staff Involvement Leads to Improvements

An emphasis on full staff involvement has been the focus of school improvement efforts at Beacon Hill Elementary School in Kelso, Washington. Following a process for improvement through the application of effective schooling research results in instructional programs, the school has involved staff in planning, goal setting and extensive inservice programs to improve instruction while working to meet a specific improvement goal.

The Kelso community is closely tied economically to the lumber-related industries in the nearby city of Longview. There is low employment countywide, but there has been no decline in enrollment in the last few years. A total of 433 students attend Beacon Hill in grades K-6, and there is a minimal minority student population. Approximately one quarter of students qualify for the school's free and reduced lunch program.

Since 1983, there has been a schoolwide emphasis on research-based school improvement, led by Principal Mary Lynne Derrington and with strong support from the district central office. Improvement efforts have included:

- The establishment of a school leadership team to manage improvements.
- Identification of a schoolwide improvement goal, extensive planning for meeting that goal, and an intensive, focused series of staff development activities tied to the goal.
- A series of innovative activities to involve staff, students and parents in meeting the improvement goal.

District Support Aids Staff Involvement

During the 1983-84 school year, Principal Derrington and the Kelso district Assistant Superintendent began exploring ways to use results of research about what makes schools effective in assuring that all students master basic priority learning objectives. They became interested in an improvement process developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and arranged a presentation of the process to all district administrators.

Beacon Hill and one other elementary school decided to adopt the process in which student performance data are collected by a school-based leadership team, the full staff determines a priority improvement goal based on the data, and planning for and implementation of improvements take place to meet the specified goal. At Beacon Hill, the principal introduced the new approach to the staff in March 1984 and selected a leadership team to manage the improvement process in April. The team includes the principal, four teachers and the central office Special Programs Director to serve as liaison to the district office.

There was strong district support for the effort. District funds covered consultant fees for training sessions, and the district paid costs of release time for team members to attend training workshops. As the team identified

Beacon Hill Elementary School

School improvement focuses on helping kids suceed at Beacon Hill Elementary School.

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resources needed to meet the improvement goal, district resources were made available for materials, consultants and special activities. As a measure of the district support, a line item for the school improvement effort was included in the district's annual budget.

One major team effort was to assure that the process was widely understood throughout the district. The team made a series of presentations to the district board of directors during the improvement effort to keep them informed about school activities. Board members were introduced to leadership team members when the team was formed, reviewed the effective schooling research with team members and examined student performance data.

To avoid divisiveness in the staff that might have occurred due to special meetings, workshops and activities by the leadership team, the team decided from the beginning of the process to channel all new information back to the full faculty. After each workshop training session, the team returned and made presentations on what they had learned, including involving all staff in the review and discussion of effective schooling research.

In October 1984, during the statewide teacher inservice day, the team arranged a speaker for the morning session then met with the entire staff in the afternoon to focus on the research. To facilitate discussion, small groups of faculty were established with each team member responsible for presenting information to one small group of five teachers and for collecting and reporting to the team all staff feedback. This created an important communications framework to assure that all staff were aware of improvement activities and that their concerns would be considered by the leadership team.

Process Leads to Goal

The team was trained in the process, and from April through December 1984 collected data to create a schoolwide "profile" of student performance, worked with the staff to select the priority improvement goal and planned for implementation of effective practices to meet that goal. The profile was completed quickly, because a good deal of student peformance data were readily available documenting student academic achievement (California Test of Basic Skills scores for several years), behavior (records from the in-school detention student discipline program) and attendance. To supplement existing data, the team surveyed all students on attitude and self esteem, and those results were included in the schoolwide data base.

Using the framework of small groups with leadership team liaisons, the full faculty examined the profile data and agreed that the highest priority in the school was to improve student math computation achievement (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division). Students were at or above district averages in all other areas, but computation scores signaled the need for improvement.

The faculty then agreed to adopt the following schoolwide goal:

> "To increase 20 percent of student math computation scores by 10 percentile points as measured by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills in March 1986. The 1985 CTBS test scores will be used as a short-term objective to measure progress toward this goal."

A detailed plan for implementing research-based effective schooling practices to meet this goal was drawn up, with an improvement strategy that focused on seven areas to increase the effectiveness of math instruction: seatwork, homework, review, enrichment, group responding techniques, mastery, and students and parents.

Staff Inservice Extensive

Key to the improvement strategy was the provision of research-related inservice session for all staff. Twice each month, during time normally set aside for faculty meetings, "Math Connection" meetings were held to examine instructional improvements. These meetings were isolated from other regular staff meetings focused on administrative matters in order to emphasize the math improvement goal, and the meetings were held in a different room.

At "Math Connection" meetings, outside speakers were brought in to discuss the seven areas, Beacon Hill staff members made presentations and the staff shared ideas and brainstormed about approaches, methods and techniques to improve math. This created a schoolwide understanding and focus that the faculty was working together to learn new ways to improve student math achievement.

These inservice sessions, supported by the district, included presentations on:

- Group responding techniques: questioning strategies to improve understanding, with an accompanying packet of materials. A second session focused on tying these strategies to Bloom's Taxonomy and an investigation of task analysis in classrooms to improve questioning techniques.
- Enrichment: staff presenters described their techniques and a demonstration of

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SUBJECT: SEATWORK

School: Beacon Hill Elementary
Goal: Improving Student Math Skills by Spring CTBS 1986

RESEARCH-BASED TASKS	CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES	SCHEDULE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	STAFF ACTIVITIES and RESOURCES	TOTAL COST	
1. Each student receives immediate feedback (24 hours if possible). The feedback is in terms of accuracy and quality.	1a. Return graded papers 1b. Make verbal comments on student's work. 1c. Use proofreading techniques. 1. sentence lifting 2. find your own errors (such as R#). 3. student self-checking kits.	April 9, 1985	Karen Pat S.	See Homework #3 - do simultaneously Intermediate share paragraph checklist & possible application to math.	-0-	
2. Monitor your class to provide adequate practice time so that the majority of the students finish the exercise.	2a. Observation 2b. Place time limit on lesson. 1. set timer. 2. must be done by recess 2:00.	April 2, 1985	ML	Book "Time on Task" Chap.5 duplicate & discuss.	printing $20	

An extensive plan was completed for implementing research-based practices to improve student math skills. This section focuses on tasks and activities regarding seatwork.

the use of computer programs for enrichment in math instruction. A separate session concerned the use of manipulatives (games, hands-on materials) as alternatives or supplements to pencil/paper teaching techniques. One teacher from the school was trained in "Math Their Way," a method of using these manipulatives, and has since become a resource person for all elementary schools in the district.

- Mastery Learning: A consultant presented a mastery-based writing program that could be adapted for math. Several teachers are now developing mastery units for eventual implementation in the district. This new approach will include a scope and sequence of skills in a mastery learning program that will establish much higher learning expectations than those included in the district's current math objectives.

- Seatwork: staff members examined the effective schooling research and presented a variety of methods that could be used to increase the effectiveness of seatwork during inclass instruction. In addition, team members developed a coded instrument for use in classroom observations of how students used seatwork time in class. All teachers were then involved in peer observations using this instrument, with partners arranged across grade levels to increase the objectivity of observations. Observations focused on math seatwork to identify student time on task and engagement rate. Results were compiled schoolwide, indicating that the math seatwork engagement rate was very high. This will be followed up with further work on time on task.

- Homework: A team of intermediate (4-6) teachers from the school surveyed parents in the district, reviewed other homework approaches and developed a grade 3-6 homework policy for the school. This includes the use of "Friday Folders" in which students take home all school communications, including weekly notes to parents from teachers with information about student progress and behavior.

- Review: the staff brought lesson plans to the meeting, and, following a presentation on the need for review, they marked objectives where they would work on student review throughout the year. This increased overall staff awareness and emphasis on incorporating review into classroom instruction.

Activities for Students and Parents

The plan for implementing new practice in the school included the introduction of a number of innovative activities for students and parents to include them in efforts to improve student math achievement. These activities included:

- In January 1985, a general student math assembly was held and the math goal announced to all students. Every teacher made awards to three students recognizing improvement or achievement in math, and all students received "I Love Math" buttons.

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- School contests were introduced, with students completing "problems of the week" and placing answers in a centrally-located "problem solving box;" and names of problem-solvers were read over the loudspeaker each week.

- A "Family Math Night" was held for parents and students at the school. Over 125 parents came with their children to explore ways parents could work with children to improve math achievement. In each classroom, teachers prepared math games tied to student interests and involving computation skills. Games were designed so that parents and students could do them together. For a portion of the evening, teachers made a presentation to parents to increase their knowledge about what to do at home with their children to help them with math.

- In April, the entire school focused on math during "Math Education Week." Among many special math activities, the week included a daily "mini-math" session at 9 AM when all students in the school took part in a five-minute uninterrupted math drill or pratice with their teachers. This daily event took place in addition to students' regular math lessons.

- The school has now adopted a family-centered math project from the National Diffusion Network that will soon be implemented. Ten to twelve math games have been completed for each grade level by teacher and parent volunteers: students will be able to check out the games and take them home to play with their parents.

- The principal includes in each issue of the monthly parent newsletter a "math tip" to suggest additional options for parents to work with students on math.

Impact of the Improvement Effort

Throughout the 1984-85 school year, there was a schoolwide emphasis on math improvement at Beacon Hill. Major efforts took place from March to June, and there was little time for impact on student achievement on the 1985 CTBS tests. Efforts are continuing nonetheless, and the school will be able to assess progress toward meeting the improvement goal after the 1986 administration of the tests.

There have been some significant changes at the school, however. Teachers are now focused on improving instruction and are looking to the research for information and ideas. A number of teachers have taken on leadership roles in the school, and several are becoming in-school resources for their expertise in instructional practice. Teachers are becoming experts for each other and building the pool of instructional expertise in the district.

Student performance data are now being used as the basis for schoolwide improvement at Beacon Hill, and other schools in the district are beginning to emulate this approach. Work has begun to improve math instruction, with the major change the adoption of a new student grouping approach. In grades 4-6, students are grouped according to achievement level established through testing and teacher evaluation. For a set time period each day, students move to math groups for instruction then return to their regular classrooms for other subjects. This is a new approach in the school, and is also used for reading instruction.

When the full implementation plan is completed at the end of March 1986, the staff will assess progress toward the improvement goal and decide whether to continue to focus on math or move to a new improvement goal. They will once again use student data to identify the improvement area and devise a plan for meeting the goal.

The teacher groups led by leadership team members continue to be an important method to assure good communications and maintain the schoolwide focus on improvement. Additional inservice sessions are planned to increase instructional effectiveness. The staff will this year begin to address the alignment of learning objectives, instruction and testing to discover further ways to improve student performance in areas of low student achievement on annual tests.

At Beacon Hill Elementary School, the introduction of a process for data-based school improvement has generated new commitment among staff and has created a schoolwide focus on improving student performance.

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